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ABSTRACT

A major problem in teacher education is the maintenance of beginning teachers' idealism in the face of practicing professionals' pragmatism. Teacher education programs train students in theories, concepts, and practices only to assign them to public schools, where the antithesis of everything the program attempted to teach is an accepted, operating norm. University programs and public school practices are in conflict regarding almost every concept of child development, learning theory, the nature of knowledge, the nature of teaching, and the use of senses in human development. The effect of professional laboratory experiences as a socialization process in teacher education needs to be studied. Much sociological, psychological, and organizational science research is relevant to understanding the student teaching experience. Several options exist to correct the situation. Students should be provided with sufficient experience and information for making career choices. A prolonged experience in several school situations would better enable the beginning teacher to determine organizational climate. Potential teachers should study organizational structures, group norms, communication patterns, information systems, decision making processes, and the uses of power. The great challenge for teacher education programs is to develop laboratory experiences which make the student more realistic about classroom teachers' group norms and the school bureaucracy without damaging the high expectations and ideals beginners may have. (CJ)

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A Theoretic and Research Basis for Reconceptualizing the Role of Professional Laboratory Experiences in Teacher Education

(A Paper Presented to the American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education)

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The great unanswered, indeed, the great unaddressed problem in teacher education, has been and remains how to preserve the idealism of the beginners from the pragmatism of the practicing professionals. The humaneness, the ideals, the energy, the commitments and most of all, the university-promulgated theories, concepts, practices and materials seem to disintegrate when pitted against the realities of most school organizations. Any of us that have supervised student teachers bear the scars of trying to reconcile what we offer students, interns and beginners with the policies and procedures operating in schools. Supervisors of professional laboratory experiences are underrewarded in the university not simply because they are too busy to publish or because they are too busy to serve on prestigious committees, but because the college supervisors themselves are so beaten down psychologically and drained emotionally they do not appear as confident equals to their peers. The fact that college supervision is a debilitating process is the result of teacher education programs that prepare students for the best of all non-existent worlds and then toss them into public schools where, quite frequently, the antithesis of everything the university program is trying to teach is an accepted, operating norm.

In 1971 after a decade of studying this process in slums, suburbs, small towns and rural areas I had the experience of visiting Greece. In response to my question, "What is your biggest problem?", the director of the teacher education program at what was reputed to be one of their finest universities responded (through an interpretor), "We prepare our students to practice modern pedagogical techniques. When they go into the schools they are not permitted to do these new things and must practice the old methods." In 1973 I visited Ireland and stopped off to chat with the director of teacher education

at the University in Cork. In response to the question, "What is your biggest problem?", he said, with an endearing brogue, "Well, you know we prepare our students to do certain things and the older clergy in the schools still manage to prevent any sort of change. Our students fit in or flee." In 1975, during a Polish trade show in Milwaukee I was the dinner partner of the Polish Ambassador, a Nobel Prize winning chemist who had formerly headed the Ministry of Polish Education. I asked him what the biggest problem in Polish teacher training was and he said, with a very heavy accent but quite understandably, "We are preparing our young people with all the latest ideas from USSR, from England, from America and, when they are going out to teach, they are not permitted to do all the wonderful things we are knowing and teaching them."

The purpose of this paper is not to simply review what any experienced teacher-educator knows--that university programs and public school practices are in conflict regarding almost every major concept of child development; learning theory; the nature of knowledge, its acquisition and use; the nature of teaching; and the use of the senses in human development. I am rather more concerned with the direct experiences which undergird this process and which transform students and beginners into conformers, not only in their pedagody but in their out-of-class roles and ultimately, in the way they think, feel and act in relation to themselves, to the other teachers, to the students and to the public. I would like to discuss the implication of the research literature for the training processes by which student teachers and beginners are socialized into practicing teachers.

The effect of professional laboratory experiences as a bureaucratic socialization process, as a force for repressing what has been learned in the

university, and as an opportunity to practice survival techniques and conforming behaviors, is an unstudied problem in teacher education. The fact that professional laboratory experiences are real, the fact that students value them more than they value university-based courses, the fact that there are opportunities for actual practice and observation of real students and teachers, the fact that these professional laboratory experiences are the most effective learning offered teaching education students, does not alter the possibility that many--even most--direct training experiences may be effectively teaching the wrong things, may be counter-teaching desirable things students would have otherwise attempted and most of all, that the process of socializing student teachers, interns and beginners into most school situations has negative impact on their potential development and functioning.

In the absence of valid, reliable research findings which can be cumulated into a reasonably well-founded position regarding the nature of how individuals function in organizations, we lapse into the morass of making and accepting common sense. We assume that schools which are complex, ritualistic, not-necessarily rational bureaucracies, controlled by special traditions and peculiar histories, managed by idiosyncratic leaders and pummelled by a variety of uncontrolled external forces, can be understood by simple explanations.

J. W. Forrester stated this widespread conceptual error in the following manner:

> "Complex systems differ from simple ones in being 'counter intuitive,' i.e., not behaving as one might expect them to. They are remarkably insensitive to changes in many system parameters, i.e., ultrastable. They stubbornly resist policy changes. They contain influential pressure points, often in unexpected places, which can alter system-steady states dramatically. They are able to compensate for externally applied efforts to correct them by reducing internal activity that corresponds to those efforts. They often react to a policy change in the long run in a way opposite to their reaction in the short run. Intuition and judgment generated by a lifetime of experience with

> the simple systems that surround one's every action create a network of expectations and perceptions that could hardly be better designed to mislead the unwary when he moves into the realm of complex systems."[1]

It goes without saying that this condition is even more applicable to universities and Schools of Education. One example of how common sense misleads (and there are literally hundreds), is in the area of job satisfaction. Common sense tells us that people who are satisfied with their work produce more. 3,300 studies conducted between 1930 and 1976, however, lead to the conclusion that there is no direct effect of job satisfaction on productivity. If there is any relation at all it is more likely to be from productivity to satisfaction; that is, that high productivity may lead to the attainment of important job values in a particular social setting.[2] Similarly, job satisfaction is not directly related to factors such as pay, working conditions, stress, and other factors. We are prone to simply assume we know their impact on individuals when in truth these factors are frequently strained through the bureaucracy and emerge with unpredicted or confounding impact.

The same problem exists on the organizational level. Common sense tells us how the organization will respond to an energy crisis, or a fiscal crisis, or a strike, but the evidence frequently reveals the reverse. The admonition that "Your answer is simple, neat and wrong" is a most appropriate characterization of how we as teacher educators seek to explain the public school as a social system and the impact of this system on the socialization of students and beginning teachers. We are a combination of "nice" and sanctimonious. We are experts at how the schools "should be," at what the

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[1]J. W. Forrester quoted in J. G. Miller, "Living Systems: The Organization," Behavioral Science, 1972, 17, p. 150.

[2]Edwin A. Locke, "Nature and Causes of Job Satisfaction," Handbook of Organizational and Industrial Psychology, M. D. Dunnette (ed.) (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1976), Chapter 30, p. 1343.

student teachers "should be," at what school faculty groups "should be," at what the school climate of public schools "should be." We just don't feel much of an obligation to examine what the impact of public school teacher groups on the student teachers and beginning teachers really is or what the actual norms of practicing teacher groups really are. Our niceness and our common sense combine into a mesmerizing potion that tells us what these conditions "should be." Too much analysis of reality is characterized as negative thinking or cynacism. It seems as if we don't want to know the reality.

Perhaps we can't deal with this problem because we are helpless: helpless to change schools, to resurrect laboratory schools, or to threaten our universities with a loss of tuition from present patterns of offering 12 credits of professional laboratory experiences. Perhaps we regard the present practices as a real-world screening; after all, if it takes tough people to survive in today's schools, maybe there should be a tough selection process which puts some pressures on the beginner. While these and other factors may be true for some of us, I have an alternate rival hypothesis which might explain the actions of a good many of us. We don't know any better! We believe, in the face of monumental evidence to the contrary, that complex organizations can be changed by newcomers sent in one-at-a-time. This religious-like assumption is supported by a second delusion: that the needs of individuals and organizations are compatible. Unfortunately, what is "good" for the individual and what is "good" for the organization are often different, sometimes mutually exclusive. This assertion becomes quite clear to anyone who compares the research and theory related to individual needs (physical, emotional, cognitive) with the stated and real operation of any large complex bureaucracy. The individual's need for rest, or love, or the expression of

new ideas must either be repressed or transformed into ways which are compatible with organizational norms. There is an impressive literature to support this contention.[3] How do we in teacher education deal with this knowledge? Do we recognize that what may be most desirable or most necessary for the student or beginning teacher may not be in harmony with the needs of the school system? Do we implement this recognition by a system of guidance for students and beginners to counsel them into not expecting to have their personal and human needs met as teachers in schools? Do we conduct research regarding areas of compatability between specific organizational climates and particular types of students and beginners? Do we conduct demonstration projects which seek to reconcile or negotiate some of the more obvious dislocations between the system and the neophyte?

On the contrary! We not only do none of these, we pursue the common sense, the non-reflective, non-empiric, the good, positive approach of simply assuming that, if individuals pursue what is in their own best interests, they will be most likely to succeed in complex school bureaucracies. This is not a question of teacher education merely failing to implement research. It is a systematic, pervasive and continuous ignoring of what the literature tells us. When we do this, we are responding, neither as responsible administrators nor as intelligent consumers of research knowledge: we are responding as "nice people," using common sense, who find it comforting to believe that if all the nice individual student teachers and all the nice individual beginning teachers do what nice student teachers and nice beginners do, they will not only find happiness but be integrated into the social

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[3]Joseph E. McGrath, "Stress and Behavior in Organizations" Handbook of Industrial and Organizational Psychology, M. D. Dunnette, ed. (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1976), Chapter 31.

systems of their school organizations.

I would like to now review several salient aspects of what the research literature tells us about the induction of beginners into working groups. You can reject these ideas by claiming that a new teacher in a school is different from a new worker in a business or in a factory. You can also reject these ideas by asserting that teaching is essentially a function of what happens between an individual teacher and his/her students. This is the "you can always close your door and do your own work" approach. This argument supposedly negates any significant power of the school faculty over the behavior of the neophyte.

My assumptions are the reverse: that much sociological, psychological and organizational science research is germane to understanding professional laboratory experiences. What we know of worker induction into the work group is in great measure, applicable to the process by which a new teacher becomes a "regular" one. Secondly, that classroom teachers, while appearing to function as independent practitioners are actually integral members of significant groups--groups which may appear to be disorganized coffee and lunch cliques but which, in essence, exert substantial control over what is taught, how it is taught, teachers' perceptions of students, teachers' relations with parents and the full range of teacher practices.

The notion that since teachers spend most of their time alone with students, that they are "free," "unsupervised," or "independent practitioners" is simple-minded. Harrison, in summarizing the literature on interaction in small groups, states:

> "A reference group is any group that provides standards by which we can evaluate ourselves and adjust our behaviour accordingly . . . A very important aspect of a reference group is that it need not be present in order to exert an

> influence on individual behavior . . . The common assumption is that if a person wants to belong to a group, that group constitutes a reference group for that person."[4]

Can student teachers, or beginning teachers, or any individual teacher for that matter not want to be an accepted member of the school faculty? This dynamic of group control is the best explanation we have for understanding the discrepancy between individual teacher behavior and group teacher behavior. Frequently, if we ask individual teachers if they will strike they say "no"--but then they do. If we ask individual teachers do they believe in standardized tests they say "no"--but then they administer them. If we ask individual teachers do they believe students should be free to go to the library they say "yes"--but then they check hall passes. If we ask individual teachers whether they believe in individual differences they reply "yes"--but then they offer only group instruction.

The usual explanations for these discrepancies are that teachers won't say what they really believe--that there is cognitive dissonance and a gap between expressed attitudes and behavior. Another explanation is that authoritarian principals, or unruly students prevent teachers from acting on their beliefs. The factor that is continuously overlooked, however, is that there are group norms, operating in the bureaucracy which impinge on teachers' behavior. From the time a teacher arrives in the morning, to the specific shelves they store their lunches upon, to the way they greet their students, through the assignments they make, the grades they give, the manner in which they look at, speak to, and listen to students, they are significantly affected by the group norms of the teacher groups in their schools. While it is true

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[4]Albert A. Harrison, Individuals and Groups,(Monterey: Brooks/Cole Publishing Co.,) p. 405.

that each of us belongs to many reference groups, it is also true that our work groups play a significant role in our lives and a highly significant role in determining our working behavior.

In his classic experiment on having subjects participate in groups that were trying to match the length of lines, Asch placed subjects in eight-person groups where every other person was set up to give the wrong answer.[5] This false majority actually said shorter lines were longer. Asch's findings were that one-third of the subjects yielded to the pressure of the group and said they saw shorter lines as longer ones. The question was then raised: Are yielders merely conforming, or do they actually perceive differently when under group influence? The more frightening question, which has not been studied, is: If group pressure can change our perceptions of simple, unemotional, physical things held before our very eyes, what distortions may these group pressures work when unleashed upon vague unseen beliefs such as "equality of educational opportunity?"

Darvis and Lofquist have described the fixed job model as a concept in which jobs are unchanging, in terms of the required performance abilities and outcomes. The goal is to match the right person with the job and if there are difficulties to blame the new person on the selection system.[6] Kahn and others have theorized about an interprersonal role-making model where the beginner has an organizational role and receives feedback from others as he behaves. This conception assumes an incompleteness in the organization and accounts for some adjustment by both the organization and the individual.[7]

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[5]S. Asch, "Studies of Independence and Conformity: A Minority of One Against a Unanimous Majority", Psychological Monographs, 1956, 70, No. 9.

[6]R. V. Darvis and L. H. Lofquist, Adjustment to Work (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1969).

[7]R. L. Kahn, et. al., Organizational Stress: Studies in Role Conflict and Ambiguity. (New York: Wiley, 1964).

Whichever conception you choose, and they both characterize some school situations, the group norms of the classroom teachers make these models operative. In the fixed situation the student teacher will be more secure but less free; in the interpersonal the student teacher will be more personally involved and feel more tension. But in either case, the norms of the teacher group will be of greatest significance in determining the student's role. (If you believe that student's don't participate in teacher groups, remind yourself that the student's cooperating teacher is a member of this group and must live with this group long after the student is gone.)

Graen has described the induction process of beginners in work situations as including three phases: initial confrontation, working through and integrating.[8] The initial confrontation stage is most interesting since it described a "disillusionment phenomenon" whereby high expectations before experience are followed by much lower expectations after experience. Vroom and Deci found these less favorable expectations beginning just prior to experience, deepening during the first year, and lasting approximately two and one-half years.[9] This phenomenon has been so reliably documented that it is now expected that newcomers will be "turned off"--that they must inevitably go through such a stage--before they can be integrated into the work group. Commentators on the research literature conclude that the most a training program or an induction process can do is to delay the full impact of disillusionment until the newcomer is prepared to cope with it.

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[8] George Graen, "Role Making Process Within Complex Organizations," Handbook of Industrial and Organizational Psychology (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1976) Ch. 27, p. 1235.

[9] V. H. Vroom and E. L. Deci, "The Stability of Past Decision Dissonance," Organizational Behavior and Human Performance, 1971, 6, p. 36-49.

Although it is clear that individuals in organizations are substantially dependent upon members of their work groups for gaining the knowledge and skills they need to perform their jobs adequately, little controlled research has been done to explain how this takes place in organizational settings. There are psychological theories of stimulus and response and sociological explanations of inherent needs for group approval and belonging but little to explain the apparently universal drive of inductees to be part of a work group, or at the very least, to not incur its displeasure.

Studies on deviation which seek to identify how much tolerance can be given newcomers also have important implications for laboratory experiences in teacher education. Findings suggest that the freedom to deviate is fairly fragile even for members who have paid their dues with long years of obedience. Pressures to conform to group norms are greatest when group members are motivated to achieve uniformity, when the norm is of importance to the group and when a member's deviant behavior is especially noticeable.[10]

It seems to me that the present public emphasis on basic skills triggers these three conditions in teacher groups. It explains why a student teacher, for example, educated in principles of child development will be steamrollered into the role of reading tutor by the operating norms of the particular teacher group. Pressures to conform are strongest when the norm is of high intensity and highly crystalized.[11] But this doesn't mean that there are not sufficient controls at all times. As long as a member needs or desires resources over which the group has control, as long as he/she seeks their approval,

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[10]J. Richard Hackman, "Group Influences on Individuals," Handbook of Industrial and Organizational Psychology (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1976), p. 1504-1505.

[11]J. Jackson, "Structural Characteristics of Norms" in I. D. Steiner and M. Fishbein (Eds.) Current Studies in Social Psychology (New York: Holt, Rinehart, Winston, 1965).

and most importantly for teacher groups--so long as he/she seeks to not be criticized by the group, the member is likely to conform.

The issue is not one of placing students in schools where the teachers get along well together or where there is dissension. Recent research by Janis suggests that high cohesiveness can in some cases be actively dysfunctional for the group as a whole.[12] Janis suggests that as a group becomes excessively close knit and develops a clubby feeling of "we-ness" it becomes susceptible to a pattern he calls groupthink. The major symptom of groupthink is a marked decrease in the openness of the group members to discrepant or unsettling information. These interpersonal strategies, Janis argues, result in an increased liklihood that the group, in a spirit of goodwill and shared confidence, will develop and implement a course of action which is grossly inappropriate and ineffective. When we reflect about it, this dynamic of groupthink can explain much of the behavior among university groups as well.

Should cohesiveness be avoided? Obviously not. Group norms provide many desirable supports which teachers use to counterbalance the bureaucracy. The question becomes the content of the norms; and the issue for teacher educators becomes the influence of these norms on student teachers and beginners.

In an effort to see if student teaching couldn't be used as force for supporting student teachers against the group norms operating in school, Wilfred E. Roy conducted a Ph.D. dissertation under my direction which specifically aimed at building a student teacher support group.[13] In this study,

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[12] I. L. Janis, Victims of Groupthink: A Psychological Study of Foreign Policy Decisions and Fiascos (New York: Houghton-Mifflin, 1972).

[13] Wilfred E. Roy, Project Together--A Group-centered Urban Student Teaching Program, Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 1972.

a special support group called Project Together, composed of 44 students was compared with 42 students sent out to experience student teaching as individuals or in small teams.

The experimental group in Project Together was given a heavy treatment of interpersonal experiences. They had more community meetings, support group meetings, cross group meetings, informal meetings, advisor meetings and individual attention than would be possible if any of you quadrupled the support for your present student teaching programs. The precise dependent variables and the instruments used to measure them were group cohesiveness, dogmatism and pupil control ideology. The hypotheses were that Project Together student teachers would be able to withstand the pressures of the group norms operating during their student teaching in the public schools and that they would remain 1) more cohesive, 2) less dogmatic, 3) more humanistic in their outlook toward pupil control and 4)likely to perceive fewer school-related problems. The great significance of this study was that the results showed no significant differences. Students in Project Together--getting massive doses of peer support and direct instruction on how to counteract the norms of the teacher groups, became just as dogmatic, just as discipline-oriented and just as isolated and helpless as the student teachers sent out on their own. This study and others lead me to question whether anything the University does can really effect the negative trends toward dogmatism and custodial attitudes which students learn, not simply because they have professional laboratory experiences, but because whatever they or their cooperating teachers do is highly susceptible to the control of group norms operating in school faculties.

Proposal

The question of what to do about all this leads to several interesting options. Ideally, students and beginning teachers would not be assigned to school buildings as individuals. They would be hired and placed into school situations in small groups or teams. In this way the washing-away of idealistic values which was observed in the Roy study might be counteracted. The support group might be more potent and durable if student teachers knew that it would continue on through the early years of their teaching careers. Realistically, however, we know that it will not be possible for schools to hire all the individuals who seek positions, let alone hire groups of beginners seeking jobs in the same building in order to maintain the security of their support groups. What then is a realistic alternative?

Part of the solution lies in the laboratory experiences we offer students prior to their entrance into teacher education. I am convinced that self-selection is the most powerful predictor of occupational success because self interest is a dependable, reliable guide to action. The problem we face is one of providing the prospective students in teacher education programs with sufficient experience and information for making career choices.

Up to now, we have focused pre-student teaching experiences on the nature of child development, or on learning, or on the role of the teacher, or on guided observation of teacher-pupil interaction. This is as it should be; however, it is a necessary but not sufficient condition. We also need to provide the prospective teacher education student with a prolonged experience, in several school situations, which enables him/her to determine the nature of the working faculty group; to answer the questions which he/she will someday ask as a beginning teacher. What kind of people are these? What do they value? What are they against? Could I function as a member of this group?

Would this group be a source of stress or support for me? Are these the kinds of people I want to spend my working life with?

Naturally, beginning students would need instruction and supervision in order to derive answers to these question. This would be no different than providing instruction in order to help them benefit from observations of children or of teaching. There would have to be a course which is concurrent with the direct experiences and which helps the prospective teacher education student to study organizational structures, group norms, communication patterns, information systems, processes for decision-making, and the uses of formal and informal power. This kind of offering would result in beginning students making a more realistic choice. There is now sufficient evidence from experimental studies to support this contention that realistic job previews will lead to increased success.[14] "Despite differences in organization type, job type, and method of job preview, all experiments reached the same conclusion with regard to turnover." [15]

The interesting question is why does a dose of realism about an organization enable the neophyte to be more successful? Wanous identifies three categories of explanation in the research literature. First are those who believe that a realistic preview of the organization attracts a different kind of person. Second are those who claim that realism communicates an air of honesty to applicants, who then feel a greater degree of freedom in their organizational choice. The third explanation is that realism lowers individual

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[14]John P. Wanous, "Organizational Entry: Newcomers Moving from Outside to Inside," Psychological Bulletin, V. 84, No. 4, July, 1977, p. 601-617.

[15]Ibid., p. 617.

expectations to a level more congruent with organizational climate. The consequence of this is that people are innoculated against the unpleasant aspects of a new environment, are not as shocked, upon entry, and are thus better able to cope in a new organization. There is insufficient evidence upon which to choose from among these three explanations. I believe all three are partially valid.

The great challenge for teacher education is to develop laboratory experiences which make the teacher education student more realistic about classroom teachers' group norms and the school bureaucracy without simultaneously damaging the high expectations and ideals which beginners might hold in relation to their pupils. How can professional laboratory experiences be made more realistic about the inevitable organizational constraints without simultaneously leading the beginner to believe that idealism in relation to his students cannot flourish in a public school environment?

The evidence indicates that organizational commitment increases with years of experience.[16] Why be concerned and make all this fuss about selecting the right individuals in an honest fashion and giving them a realistic preview of school organization? After all, the longer they stay in schools the more likely they are to adjust to and accept the system. The answer to me is clear. We can prevent the great waste of preparing large numbers who cannot fit in and who flee. But even more importantly, through realistic professional laboratory experiences which focus on the work group and the school bureaucracy, as well as on the children, we can prepare teachers who will exert some effective change strategies back on the system and not merely

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[16]Lawrence G. Hrebiniak and Joseph A. Alutto, "Personal and Role Related Factors in the Development of Organizational Commitment," Administrative Science Quarterly, V. 13, 1972, pp. 555-570.

adjust to it.

At present, professional laboratory experiences are realistic in the same sense that being pushed over Niagara Falls is realistic. We should foster an educative realism which helps students to answer the question, "Do I want to do this as a life-long career?" not only in terms of his/her relationships with pupils but in terms of his/her ability to survive, cope, thrive and, yes, even influence the organizational situation.

There is no question but that, if we continue to ignore the situation and to serve as knee-jerk worshippers of professional laboratory experiences, we will continue to sacrifice our graduates and our programs to the group norms now operating in public schools. By continuing present practices we will be helping to process masses of students through experiences which will make them tougher, more insensitive, more discipline oriented, more custodial in role-set, and with lower expectations. This is not what all individual, teacher practitioners believe, but these norms are fairly typical and acted upon in many school systems.

The AACTE is understandably focused on NCATE, ^on teacher practices acts in the various states and ^on the political issue of who controls the governance of teacher education. The thesis of this paper is that if you really believe professional laboratory experiences are as critical as they are (and I certainly do), then classroom ^teacher groups have controlled teacher education for years--not with formal control but with the real power over what is learned. Remember this! There is nothing that can be taught students in public schools that will not be filtered through the group norms and organizational culture of that school.

Thank you for your attention. I appreciate ^that these have not been ideas that sit well with you.